

Quint 10-11
1509/1509 - 1772

MINUTES of a CONVERSATION,

At the *Monday Night's CLUB*,

Held at the Royal Oak, in the Village of —.

PRESENT,

Mr. *Tempest*, School-master, in the CHAIR.

John Gubbins, *Joe Lumkin*, *Will. Sprat*, &c.

Mr. *Tempest*. WELL, Gentlemen, I am glad we are so unanimous upon this occasion, and think we may adopt the whole of the *Liverpool Propositions*; Reason you see is the leading principle, and what signifies our reason, unless we make use of it?

Gubbins. You say true Mr. Chairman, for one man has as much right to use his reason as another, and as the Propositions say, "we are all in this respect alike."

Tempest. Then as to *Parliamentary Representation*, there is not one here present that has a vote for a Parliament man! but this will be set right by the proposed *Reform*.

Lumkin. True again, for then we shall all have votes, and perhaps some of us may be Parliament Men ourselves——

Tempest. I wonder what our Friend Mildman will say to this, its well he's not here, for we should soon have answered all his old-fashioned arguments in favour of King, Lords and Commons.

Gubbins. Aye, aye, those things will not go down now.

Tempest. We shall too, live in charity with our neighbours the French, who would all become our "*Friends and Brothers*."

Sprat. Damn me, if ever I shou'd like a Frenchman for all that.

Tempest. Pooh, pooh, Mr. Sprat, you're mistaken, things will come about, never fear—well Gentlemen, but we must think of altering the name of our Club; *Monday Night's Club* will be too insignificant for such a *Constitutional Society*.

have no kings peeping over our heads.

Tempest.



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Tempest. But to begin with the Club. What shall be our title? what think you of the *Liberty Club*, or shall you like the title of our Friends in France, and call it the *Jacobin Club*.

Lumkin. Aye, aye, the *Jacobite Club*, will do very well.

Tempest. Hold, hold, Mr. Lumkin, we must have nothing to do with *Jacobites*, *Jacobin* has a very different meaning, tho' I must confess I never rightly understood it—but its a good founding word—you agree to *Jacobin*, Gentlemen?

All. Aye, aye, agreed.

Tempest. But then for the sign—ring the bell and call in the Landlord, if you mean to have our custom, you must change your sign, we are all *Jacobin Men*, and must not have the King staring out of the Tree.

Landlord. What think you of the *King's Arms*, Gentlemen?

All. No, no, that won't do.

Gubbins. We'll have the *Tree of Liberty*.

Landlord. Well then, I hope I can soon please you, Gentlemen, by blotting out the *King's Face*, and instead of *Royal Oak*, writing under, *the Tree of Liberty*, for I suppose the *Leaves* may do for any Tree.

All. Aye, aye, that will do exceeding well.

Enter *Mildman*, the Curate.

Tempest. Your servant, Mr. Mildman, we have been doing business in your absence, have you seen the *Liverpool Propositions*, we have agreed to adopt them in our Club?

Mildman. I am truly sorry for it, for I think I never met with more incoherent stuff, or of more dangerous tendency—I have just been reading them.

Tempest. That's a bold saying, Master Mildman, and we think you will not be able to make your words good.

Mildman. Put me to the test, and stop your proceedings, till you hear what I have to say.

Sprat. Aye, let's hear what he has to say.

Mr. n. n. n. You have got the paper there before you Mr. Chair-
man,

man, friend Sprat is a good orator, let him read it aloud, and I will submit my observations as he goes on, to the company.

Sprat. Reads, " At a meeting, for the purpose of a Parliamentary Reform, held in Liverpool, the 21st of November, 1792, the following Propositions were agreed to unanimously.

" Every man who possesses reason, hath an inherent right to exercise that reason on every thing in which his own interest, or the interest of his fellow-creatures is concerned—For, if the reason of one man, or any body of men, had been intended to regulate the opinions of the rest of mankind, reason in the latter, would have been unnecessary—but reason hath been given to all men by him who giveth nothing in vain—therefore, reason was given for every man's own use; and he who neglects to cultivate this noblest prerogative of man, sins against the Eternal Cause."

Mildman. You say, Mr. Chairman, you have adopted these Propositions; then pray tell me what you understand in this by *Reason*?

Tempest. By reason, why we understand, reason to be sure, or the power given us to reason, and discern, " what is what."

Mildman. Do you mean judgement and understanding?

Tempest. Yes, to be sure, every man in his senses is born with understanding.

Mildman. True, Mr. Chairman, but not with equal powers and capacities—these are of various kinds, and would have been " given in vain," had not the " Eternal Cause" in his goodness thought fit to suit them to the various wants and exigences of mankind—depend upon it, we were not all designed for the same exercises or attainments—every man has his talent given him to profit withal, and it would be infinitely more for our advantage, to restrain our pursuits, and confine them to the proper business of our several callings, than attempt an usurpation of that which evidently belongs to other men; for will any one here in his conscience say, that he does not think himself better and more profitably employed in the province at present assigned him, than in that of a *Senator* or *Statesman*—I am sure you will think with me, that we shall best exercise our Reason and prudence in studying to be quiet, by minding our own business, and leaving it to others, of whatever rank, to do the same without interruption.

Chairman. Read on, Brother Sprat.

Sprat reads. " Every person who contributes to the support of any institution, ought to have a voice in the management of that institution, especially if his happiness be involved in its prosperity. Now, since every article of clothing and of food contributes to the support of government, it is evident that every person ought to exercise the right of suffrage in the legislation of this Country."

Mildman.

Mildman. And can you seriously, Mr. Chairman, adopt this absurdity, and acquiesce in conferring a share in government on "every individual" who contributes to its support by eating food or wearing cloathes?—By the same rule, every stranger that sets his foot upon the island, nay, the very people you detest so much, all the crowd of French Emigrants, both laity and clergy, would have as good a right to elect his representative as the best born Englishman amongst us.

Chairman. Read on Mr. Sprat.

Sprat reads. "The right of voting for members of Parliament cannot reside in *Place*, for then the ruins of a town, or a desert island might take an active part in government; nor can the right be attached to *Property*, for then every person would possess a number of votes proportioned to his wealth, and the representation would be in a state of perpetual fluctuation and uncertainty; moreover, the loss of riches would be attended by the deprivation of the rights of citizenship, and thus, injustice would be added to misfortune; consequently the right of suffrage, not depending on external circumstances, must belong to *Man* alone, and therefore must be equal in every individual."

Mildman. I trust, Mr. Chairman, I have convinced you of the absurdity of conferring the right to vote for Representatives in Parliament on "*every Individual*;" consequently, it can only reside and be attached to "*Place and Property*," for these are the only permanent and fixed interest in any country, nay, the very towns decayed, or deserted lands, which the writer of the Propositions alludes to, may be profited, and consequently the general interests of the country by *Representation*—they would then stand a fair chance, the one of being restored to consequence, the other, cultivated and improved; whereas your *Patriotic Individual*, has no settled place or interest whatsoever, he may do you all the mischief he can, and then leave you to reap the fruits of your own folly; like Mr. Thomas Paine, after disturbing the counsels of this country, and becoming outlawed, he may mix in those of France; from whence, after playing the same iniquitous game in the *National Convention*, we may possibly hear of him in the Cabinet of *Tippoo Saib*, or the *Great Mogul*.

Chairman. Go on Mr. Sprat.

Sprat reads. "The mild and benevolent doctrines of Christianity assure us, that the God of Nature regards with an equal eye all the sons of men, that he is no respecter of persons, that virtue and vice are the only distinctions in his sight—those, therefore, who oppose the doctrine of "All men being born equal in respect of their rights," not only deny the fundamental doctrines of religion, but tax heaven with partiality and injustice."

"This principle of *Equal Rights* we consider as best calculated to give stability to government, and to secure private property—for.
" upon

“ upon this principle, to impede government, would be to thwart our
 “ own interest—and not to respect the property of others, would be
 “ to violate this grand maxim of eternal justice—hence we perceive,
 “ that the *Rights of Man* have their origin in the *nature of man*, and
 “ contained in this divine precept, “ Whatsoever ye would that men
 “ should do unto you, do ye also unto them.”

Mildman. I am quite out of patience with all this ridiculous jargon about the “ *State of Nature*” and the “ *Rights of Man*.” Would they infer a wish that all men should return to their original state of equality, and abolish every distinction and difference whatsoever amongst them?—Supposing this the case, and allowing the idea of introducing a complete state of equality, it could not, from the nature of man, exist a moment—even in common conversation, one man will immediately discover his superiority over another, and human powers are, by the *Author of Nature*, so variously distributed, as to exclude all possibility of equality, for, “ he hath given to every man severally as he pleaseth,” and so ordained by wise connexion and chain of parts, that each should contribute to the benefit of the other; for, “ the eye cannot say to the hand I have no need of thee,” nor again, “ the head to the feet, I have no need of you.”—I may be allowed to quote the Scripture as well as the author of these *Propositions*, and I wish he would do it to better purpose—he will there find very different doctrines from those he wishes to inculcate, viz. “ *Be subject one to another*”—“ *submit yourselves to every ordinance of man*,”—“ *render to all their due*”—“ *fear to whom fear*”—“ *honour to whom honour*”—“ *Fear God, honour the King*,” &c. &c.

Chairman. Go on Mr. Sprat.

Sprat reads. “ No nation can be perfectly free in which the property of one person is at the disposal of the rest—A great majority of the inhabitants of Britain are not represented in Parliament, and therefore the property is evidently at the disposal of that part which is represented—consequently, in the present state of things, Great Britain cannot be justly said to be free.”

Mildman. This is a heap of false premises and false conclusions, calculated merely by designing men to mislead the ignorant and vulgar; for what people or country can boast of freedom equal with ourselves, where every individual, whether represented or not, is perfectly secure both in *person* and *property*, and is subjected to no restraints whatever, but such as the general peace and safety of the community require?

Chairman. Go on Mr. Sprat.

Sprat reads. “ Hence we may observe, that reason, religion, and human policy, all point, not only the justice, but the necessity, of a complete PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, founded on the broad and firm basis of universal Suffrage, and as friends to peace, to good
 “ order,

“ order, and to our country, we consider it as our indispensable duty
 “ to promote this grand and salutary purpose, by every just and legal
 “ exertion in our power.”

Mildman. Neither “ Reason,” “ Religion,” nor “ Policy,” do any such thing—and we should shew ourselves more the friends of peace, of order, and of our country, by a ready submission to a well established form of government, than in distressing and disturbing its counsels, by shameful misrepresentations, and every other illegal opposition.

Chairman. Go on Mr. Sprat.

Sprat reads. “ If it be asked what advantage would result from a
 “ House of Commons so constituted? we answer—It is highly probable that such a House of Commons would gradually and peaceably reform the abuses which at present exist in the government; the taxes would be diminished; wars would either entirely cease, or become much less frequent; monopolies of every kind would be abolished, commerce extended, and arts and manufactures more encouraged; the laws would be simplified, and justice administered more expeditiously, and at less expence; and instead of being taught that the neighboring states are our natural enemies, we should consider them as our friends and brothers—hence, such a reform would, ultimately promote the happiness of mankind.”

Mildman. Very flattering and splendid advantages these!—But what security have we for their accomplishment?—Mere verbal assurances will not be sufficient, and there is no man in his senses who has any property, or real interest at stake that would risk the experiment, and wish an exchange of Members in the *British House of Commons*, for those of a *French National Convention*, or, men of a similar cast and character.—But, say they, we shall become “ Friends and Brothers” to these Republican neighbours of ours—I disclaim all such alliance, and should hold myself degraded by any connexion with a people of such base and infamous character, who have not a spark of religion or common humanity amongst them—read the Christian doctrine of “ forgiving your enemies” in the parable of the good Samaritan, and contrast therewith, the conduct of the French Reformers towards the poor distressed Emigrants, whose only fault was that of acting from principle and motives of conscience, whilst those of their persecutors were evidently no other than the hopes of plunder, and gain to themselves. Away, I say, with all such base connexions, for “ what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness,” or, “ what part hath he that believeth, with an infidel.”

Lumkin. You have said enough, Mr. Curate, you have said enough.

Mildman. I hope then, gentlemen, you will not adopt these seditious Propositions.

All.

All. No, no, no. we'll have none of them.

Chairman. Then, gentlemen, I suppose I may put the paper into the fire.

All. Aye, aye, burn it, burn it.

Chairman. And preserve the old title of our Club?

Lumkin. And the old sign too—call in the Landlord.

Enter Landlord.

Chairman. We have agreed Mr. Landlord, that you may keep up your sign.

Landlord. I am heartily glad of it, Gentlemen, for I should have been sorry to part with it—my house has always been noted for *loyal* customers.

Sprat. We'll have it new painted.

All. Aye, aye, let it be new painted.

Sprat. And hark you, Landlord, and let the words *Royal Oak* be written in gold letters.

Landlord. I thank you kindly, Gentlemen, it shall be done.
(going)

Sprat. Stay, Landlord, drink CHURCH and KING in a Bumper, and prosperity to the ROYAL OAK.

All. Huzza, huzza, huzza.



